

REINTRODUCTION OF THE TRUMPETER SWAN
PERFORMANCE REPORT, 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1991

by Sumner W. Matteson

SUMMARY

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources continued the trumpeter swan recovery program.

The cross-fostering program has been discontinued because it is not cost-effective and success was poor during the summers of 1987 and 1988.

Forty Alaskan trumpeter swan eggs were collected and transferred to the Milwaukee County Zoo. These eggs joined 10 trumpeter eggs from a game farm and 7 eggs from a captive pair at the zoo for a total of 57 eggs.

Seven Alaskan eggs died in late term. Two game farm eggs did not hatch. In total, 33 (82%) of the 40 Alaskan eggs and 48 (84%) of all 57 eggs hatched. During the past 3 years, 129 of 140 Alaskan swan eggs have successfully hatched.

There are 4 captive-rearing sites in Wisconsin; three of these presently hold swans.

The need to remove the mute swan from the state's list of protected species was documented and a WDNR Mute Swan Committee established. A draft control policy shall be discussed at future public meetings.

Continued public information and education activities included development of an annual video documentary on the program, talks at bird clubs, conferences, citizen groups, and nature centers. Coverage of the state's recovery efforts has been excellent and the program is receiving increasing public support.

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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

PERFORMANCE REPORT

REINTRODUCTION OF THE TRUMPETER SWAN

REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JULY 1990 TO 30 JUNE 1991

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JOB:	216.1	Identify/maintain habitat
	216.2	Coordinate cross-fostering program
	216.3	Survivorship of fostered cygnets
	216.4	Coordinate raising Alaskan stock
	216.5	Stock individual adult swans
	216.6	Mute Swan control
	216.7	Develop I&E program

Job 216.1: Identify/maintain habitat

No monies were allocated to this job during the reporting period.

Job 216.2: Coordinate the development of the cross-fostering program.

This job has been discontinued because it is not cost-effective and success, measured by the number of young to survive to at least one year of age, was poor during the summers of 1987 and 1988. Only 1 young from 35 cross-fostered eggs survived to 1 year of age. Snapping turtle predation, lead poisoning, and cob aggression toward fostered cygnets were responsible for the deaths of fostered cygnets. No monies were allocated to this job during the reporting period.

Job 216.3: Survivorship of fostered cygnets.

No monies were allocated to this job during the reporting period.

Job 216.4: Coordinate raising Alaskan stock. This involved the following tasks: obtaining permission from respective flyway councils, obtaining permits to collect 40 eggs from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service (USFWS) and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game; making arrangements with private transportation to the state of Alaska to collect 40 eggs in June; continuing implementation of cooperative agreements as necessary with the state of Minnesota, and the Milwaukee County Zoo; collecting and transferring 40 Alaska Trumpeter Swan eggs to the Milwaukee County Zoo; and providing direction for the rearing of "Alaskan" cygnets.

As in the previous year, the coordination and collection of 40 Alaskan Trumpeter Swan eggs went well. Terry and Mary Kohler of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, chartered the use of a private jet for the trip to Glennallen, ca. 110 miles north of Valdez in southeastern Alaska. Due to inclement weather, egg collection began on the afternoon of 9 June. Nests selected for collection were on lakes where no collection took place in 1990. This increased the likelihood that "new" pairs were contributing to the program. Egg collection by Sumner Matteson and pilot/biologist Rod King took 8.5 hours.

En route to Wisconsin on the return leg, the eggs were incubated in 3 temperature-controlled insulated crates that Terry Kohler had directed the Vollrath Company to design and build. The temperature of the crates was digitally controlled and programmed to heat the eggs at 94 degrees F.

The return flight to Milwaukee took about 12 hours. In incubators at the Milwaukee County Zoo, the 40 Alaskan eggs joined 10 Trumpeter eggs obtained from a game farm and 7 eggs obtained from a captive pair at the zoo, for a total of 57 eggs.

The Alaskan eggs hatched from 20 to 30 June. Seven Alaskan eggs died in late term, including 5 that were within 24 hours of hatching. Two game farm eggs did not hatch. In total, 33 (82%) of the 40 Alaskan eggs and 48 (84%) of all 57 eggs hatched. During the past 3 years, 129 (93%) of 140 Alaskan swan eggs have successfully hatched.

One of the game farm cygnets died during the first week of life for unknown reasons. Two of the Alaskan cygnets died during their first week of life: one lost weight rapidly and died and the second accidentally hung itself on the string from a decoy surrogate parent used in imprinting sessions as part of Wisconsin's decoy-rearing project, mostly conducted at the Mead Wildlife Area in Marathon County. A third Alaskan cygnet died when it became entangled in wire mesh of a cage at the marsh imprinting site. A fourth Alaskan cygnet was attacked by a snapping turtle and is undergoing treatment. Two other cygnets developed neck problems and underwent treatment.

Job 216.5: Stock individual adult swans.

There are 4 captive-rearing sites in Wisconsin; three of these presently hold swans. Plans were developed and implemented for the construction of a second General Electric Medical Systems captive-rearing site near Pewaukee in Waukesha County. This 2-acre site received 13 cygnets in October 1990 and will be able to hold up to 20 swans. Also built was a new captive-rearing site in southern Dane County, where up to 20 cygnets will be placed in 1994. In addition, the St. Croix County captive-rearing site, established in 1987, was rebuilt and received 6 cygnets in October 1990.

On 8 May 1991, the WDNR rounded up 18 subadults at the General Electric Medical Systems' captive-rearing site and released them in northern Wisconsin - 14 subadults in southern Burnett County/northern Polk County and 4 subadults in Vilas County. In addition, 4 yearlings produced by a captive pair held near Baraboo were released in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area vicinity.

Job 216.6: Mute Swan control.

The need to remove the Mute Swan from the state's list of protected species was documented and a WDNR Mute Swan Committee established; a draft control policy, written by the committee, shall be discussed at future public meetings.

Job 216.7: Develop I&E program.

Continued public information and education activities included regular written updates on the status of the recovery program, updating of an annual video documentary on the program, talks at bird clubs, the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Service Conference, and at nature centers. Educational efforts were also spearheaded through the Friends of the Trumpeter Swan. Earth Day activities, held again in 1991 at the General Electric Medical Systems Facility near Pewaukee, attracted hundreds of participants to view the "Alaskan" Trumpeters held at a captive-rearing pond.

Press releases have been picked up regularly by the state's major newspapers as well as many local papers. Coverage of the state's recovery efforts has been excellent and the program is receiving increasing public and private sector support.